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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, AND INR/AA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: SENEGAL: DISMISSAL OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT
SETS THE STAGE FOR SUCCESSION BATTLE

Classified By: Classified by DCM Jay Smith for reasons 1.5 B/D.

11. (SBU) Summary and Introduction: On November 9, the National Assembly voted 111 to 22 to remove Macky Sall from his position as president of the National Assembly. The sacking of Sall was the result of Sall's (likely politically motivated) attempt a year ago to convoke President Abdoulaye Wade's son Karim to testify before the National Assembly in his role as chairman of ANOCI (the national agency for the preparation for the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference - OIC). Sall immediately resigned from the ruling Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) and as a result from his positions as a deputy at the National Assembly and Mayor of Fatick setting the stage for the upcoming succession battle. End summary.

Origin of the Conflict: A Threat to the Would-Be Dauphin

12. (SBU) Officially, Sall issued the request for Karim to testify to clear up rampant rumors about misuse of state funds and to inform the National Assembly about the progress of preparations for the OIC Summit. However, it is commonly believed by political observers in Dakar, both Senegalese and diplomatic, that Sall, who is believed to have presidential ambitions, wanted to publicly embarrass Karim. Ostensibly this would have come about either through his inability to properly account and explain how money is being spent or, more likely, Karim Wade would have been posed questions in Wolof (the most-widely spoken language in Senegal). Karim is not a Wolof speaker and many believe that his inability to either understand the questions or respond in Wolof would have hurt his chances and been used against him during the upcoming succession struggle.

13. (SBU) In any event, President Wade viewed the action by his one-time political protg and prime minister from 2004-2007 as a grave political mistake for which Sall had to pay "cash." Sall was immediately stripped, at President Wade's direction, of his position as the titular number two of the PDS and pressured to resign from his position as president of the National Assembly. However, because the position had a constitutionally mandated five-year term, President Wade and his supporters in the National Assembly could not force Sall to resign. President Wade temporarily abandoned his efforts after the intervention of the new caliph general of the Mourides Muslim brotherhood, of which Wade is a member. However, he returned to the matter after the summer recess of the National Assembly. His supporters in the National Assembly modified the constitution at the beginning of October to limit the term of the president of the National Assembly (as well as that of the Senate) to one year to allow for Sall's removal.

Where Does Sall Go from Here?

14. (C) In the immediate term Sall has opted to go to France.

The French ambassador told Ambassador that Sall fears for his safety. While it is unclear if these fears are founded, it is a truism of Senegalese politics that ambitious political leaders that have fallen out of favor with or challenge President Wade tend to find themselves spending some time in prison. Former prime minister and rival to Sall, Idrissa Seck first went to jail then into self-imposed political exile in France following his falling out with President Wade.

The Succession Battle Begins to Take Shape

15. (C) Like Seck, Sall is likely to form a new liberal political party in an attempt to set himself up to succeed the 82-year-old Wade who is unlikely to run again at the end of his term in 2012. According to political observers here, Sall, who is the first and only member of the Halpular (Peul or Fula and Toukoleur) ethnic group to become prime minister, can likely count on a significant amount of support from members of his ethnic group (which represents 24 percent of the population) as well as those of his wife, an ethnic Serer (the Serers make up about 15 percent of the population).

16. (C) This sets the stage for a succession battle on the right. Seck has been in negotiation for a year now with President Wade regarding the possibility of a rapprochement. Seck has told us that his price for reconciliation is to be publicly supported by Wade as his successor and to be made the head of the ruling PDS. We suspect he would be satisfied with getting the party. Meanwhile, Karim has begun to slowly come out of the political closet. According to his advisers,

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he has come to the conclusion that he can successfully run for president and has decided to do so. To that end, his political support group, the "Generation du Concret," and various friends of Karim associations that he has set up and seeded throughout the country will be participating in the local and municipal elections scheduled for March 2009. Karim himself is expected to try to become mayor of Dakar and use this position as a platform from which to succeed his father. Finally, the current mayor of Dakar and president of the Senate, Pape Diop, is believed to have his own ambitions for the top job. His position as Senate president makes him the titular number two figure in the country. Moreover, were Wade to leave office early, Diop would become acting president and be responsible for organizing elections in 90 days. The Senegalese constitution does not bar him from standing in those elections.

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